

Lecture 3

Harmony Between The Individual And The Collectivity

Yesterday we considered man as an individual. There are different aspects to an individual's personality, different levels of needs for an individual in order to develop a complete personality. To satisfy the needs progressively but simultaneously at all levels, certain specific kinds of efforts (पुरुषार्थ) are needed. These, too, were considered. But man does not exist merely as an individual. The individual comprising body, mind, intellect and soul is not limited to a singular 'I' but is also inseparably related to the plural 'We'. Therefore, we must also think of the group or the society.

Theories About Society

It is a simple truth that society is a group of men. But how did society come into being? Many views have been put forward by philosophers. Those propounded in the West and on which the Western socio-political structure is based, can be broadly summarised as, "Society is a group of individuals who, having entered into an agreement among themselves, brought it into being". This view is known as the 'Social Contract Theory'. Individual is given greater importance in this view. If there are any differences in different Western views, these pertain only to the questions, namely, "If the individual produced a society, then, in whom does the residual power remain vested – in the society or the individual? Does the individual have the right to change the society? Can the society impose a variety of regulations on the individual and claim a right to the allegiance of the individual to itself? Or is the individual free in regard to these questions?"

Individual Versus Society

There is a controversy in the West on this question. Some have advocated the supremacy of the society and from this a conflict has arisen. The view that individuals have brought the society into being is fundamentally incorrect. It is true that society is composed of a number of individuals. Yet it is not created by the individuals, nor does it come into being by the mere coming together of a number of individuals.

In our view, society is self-born. Like an individual, society comes